

What Felix Bloch

By Joseph Trento and Susan Trento

FOR FELIX BLOCH—KGB agent or not—there may be no way out. He's in a kind of counterintelligence limbo: The FBI has enough evidence to suspect that he's a Soviet agent, but not enough to indict or arrest him. If Bloch and his family think the worst is behind them, then we suggest they visit a small art gallery in Alexandria.

The Gallery Orlov in Old Town and its small collection of European prints are tended by a knowledgeable old woman named Eleonore. When you enter the gallery there is not a hint that you are standing on a KGB-CIA battleground. The battles were fought over Eleonore's late husband, Igor Orlov, who died in the spring of 1982. He was suspected by the CIA and FBI of recruiting CIA agents into the KGB when he served the CIA in postwar Germany three decades ago. The Orlov case, which we researched in detail while preparing a book on America's counter-intelligence problems, provides an eerie parallel to the Felix Bloch case. In both instances, the CIA and FBI used tactics of intimidation and harassment to make up for a botched investigation.

Orlov's chief accuser was James Jesus Angleton, the brilliant and mysterious chief of counter-intelligence at the CIA for a generation. Former CIA deputy director Hank Knoche recalls Angleton's hyper-suspicious method: "You almost have to be 100 percent paranoid to do that job You always have to assume, without necessarily having the proof in your hands, that your own organization had been penetrated and that there's a mole around somewhere."

Angleton's suspicions about Orlov were first aroused by a Soviet defector named Anatolyi Golitsyn, code-named STONE, who arrived in America in late 1961. Golitsyn told Angleton's staff that a Soviet penetration agent had blown CIA operations in Western Europe, causing the death and imprisonment of several dozen Western agents. His code name was SASHA. Angleton became convinced that whoever had worked with SASHA, whoever had given SASHA his jobs and provided him opportunities, was probably also working for the KGB.

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By early 1964, Angleton decided that SASHA was Igor Orlov, a man hired by the CIA in Germany after World War II to recruit beautiful women to compromise Soviet officers into becoming CIA agents. What made this hypothesis doubly frightening was that several of Orlov's CIA handlers had reached the highest levels of the CIA in their subsequent careers.

Orlov's troubles had actually begun soon after the CIA transferred him to the United States for a new assignment in January 1961. His boss in Germany had complained that Igor was a security risk. When the Orlovs arrived in Washington, Igor called his CIA contacts to discuss his new job. He was told there was no work for him. His friends who had brought him to America would not take his telephone calls. The CIA offered Orlov a Berlitz course in English and a \$2,500 settlement for all the years he had served the CIA doing very dangerous work. He told them to go to hell.

Igor and his wife, Eleonore, lived hand to mouth, trying to support their two sons in a new and strange country. He finally got a job as a Washington Post truck driver, five hours a night for \$60 a week. The family saved until they could afford to open a small picture-framing shop.

Angleton constantly pressed the bureau to watch Orlov's picture-framing gallery and home to see if any CIA people under suspicion or Soviets visited the small shop. In March 1965, Angleton's probe culminated with an FBI raid on the Orlov house and shop. Orlov was interrogated for the next two months. FBI agents threatened "problems" for his widowed mother in Moscow.

Finally, Orlov did what the FBI obviously hopes Felix Bloch will do. One afternoon, while loading his newspaper truck, he panicked. The Washington Post is across an alley from the rear of the Soviet Embassy. Orlov saw a Russian official directing trash removal through a rear door. He quickly ran from the loading dock at the paper over to the man and began speaking to him in Russian. Orlov told him he needed help. The man invited him in. Orlov was taken into a small reception room with a large mirror on the wall. Orlov detailed his fears that his mother in the Soviet Union might be harmed and

his problems with the FBI. He said if he was arrested by the FBI, his wife and sons would have no one to take care of them.

The Soviets offered the family asylum. Orlov made arrangements for the family to be picked up by the Russians the next afternoon. The embassy official gave Orlov an address to write to and sent him on his way out the front of the embassy. Relieved, Igor went home and told his wife of the arrangements he had made for her protection. When Eleonore protested, her husband told her, "How will you eat? You must do this for the boys."

The next day she dropped Orlov off at the Old Post Office, where the FBI harshly interrogated him about his visit the previous day to the Russian Embassy. An FBI surveillance team had watched him enter the building. After hours of merciless questioning, it became clear to the FBI agents and others in Soviet counter-intelligence that they could not prove that Orlov was a KGB agent. What finally convinced them was a phone call from the Soviet ambassador, asking the State Department if the United States had sent Orlov to the embassy as a provocation.

To the great relief of Mrs. Orlov, who expected that she and her chil-

dren would be leaving imminently for Russia, her husband was released that sunny spring afternoon by the FBI. They told him he had been cleared. The Orlov family thought their ordeal was finally over.

But Angleton remained fixated on Orlov because of Golitsyn's warning. Even though the FBI was short of staff and could put its counter-intelligence agents to better use handling more promising cases, Angleton pressed them to pursue the Orlov case. The FBI agents grew weary of what they considered a wild goose chase. They concluded that Angleton had been snookered. After all, even if Igor Orlov was SASHA, what harm could he do now? He was driving a truck and making picture frames. But just when the FBI had cooled to the Orlov probe, the KGB sent in an agent to heat it back up again.

In June 1966, KGB Maj. Igor Kozlov called Richard Helms, then CIA deputy director, and offered his services to the agency. He had no desire to defect to America. He wanted to be an agent in place. After a series of meetings Kozlov (code named KITTY HAWK) convinced the CIA and FBI that he was real.

The FBI liked him because he supported the evidence of an earlier defector (doubted by the CIA) that Lee Harvey Oswald had not been recruited by the KGB to kill President Kennedy. The CIA liked KITTY HAWK because he repeated Golitsyn's charges that SASHA was Igor Orlov, the picture framer! KITTY HAWK even told his new employers the time and date Orlov visited the Soviet Embassy.

The renewed FBI investigation left Igor Orlov an embittered and broken man. He refused to leave the shop or their apartment above it. The FBI never had the evidence to arrest him, let alone take him to court. The FBI concluded many years later, in a 1980 investigation of the case, that KITTY HAWK was a fraud. But that didn't help Igor Orlov. When cancer invaded his body and took his life in May 1982, his

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Can Learn from the



IGOR AND ELEONORE ORLOV IN THE LATE 1940S

Case of Igor Orlov

widow believed the nightmare had ended.

On a quiet Saturday in January, 1988, Eleonore Orlov was straightening up her frame shop. There was a knock at the door. The young woman standing on the front stoop introduced herself as Stephanie P. Gleason, "special agent FBI." With her was Charles K. Sciarini, also an FBI agent from the Washington field office. Special Agent Gleason told her the FBI had obtained important and convincing information that Igor Orlov was a KGB agent and that he had recruited both of her sons to work for the KGB. At precisely the same time, FBI agents in Chicago and Boston were approaching Mrs. Orlov's sons, George and Robert.

What triggered this bizarre raid were the statements of a *third* Soviet defector, Vitaly Yurchenko. The KGB was casting its SASHA bait for the third time, and the FBI had bitten once again.

Eleonore Orlov was frightened. The agents told her they suspected that hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash and other illicit material were hidden on her property. Agents Gleason and Sciarini said they wanted her permission to dig up her back yard. She told them that the only things buried in the backyard were her dead cats.

She went along with this outrage because, she says, agents Gleason and Sciarini strongly suggested that if she didn't, a security clearance held by her son George, a nuclear engineer, would be lifted. So the agents searched her house and questioned her. The nightmare that had dominated her husband's life now was following her and her sons. Special Agent Gleason confiscated her 30 years of business records. Now, one by one, the FBI is investigating the picture-framing clients to determine if they are Soviet agents.

Robert Orlov, astounded by the FBI's intrusion in his life, told the agents who approached him that af-

ternoon that if they wanted to see him they could make an appointment. In Chicago, George Orlov, knowing full well what the FBI could do to his career, was skeptical enough that he pushed the agents to reveal details of their case. At the FBI's Chicago office, Agent Vincente Rosado handed Orlov a three-page transcript of a portion of the Yurchenko debriefing. They then played a tape of the actual debriefing to reinforce what Orlov was reading.

"Yurchenko identified my father as a KGB agent," recalls George Orlov. "He said Igor Orlov is an agent, lives in Arlington, has two children who went to school in Boston and that he recruited both of them. One travels a lot. One lives in Boston. One lives in Chicago. The one in Chicago went to San Diego, San Francisco . . . and [he] named all the cities I had been to. He said one or more of us had been recruited and we were both working for the KGB.

"They told me I was a traitor, and if I would just sign a confession, it would go better for me."

It turned out that the FBI had been following and monitoring the Orlovs since 1985, when Yurchenko

first made the allegations. The Orlovs' mail is opened by the FBI, their telephones are tapped, all because a defector, who suffers serious credibility problems, alleged that Igor Orlov recruited his sons. Like Golitsyn and KITTY HAWK, Yurchenko in 1985 captivated the CIA and FBI with his revelations.

Four years into the third SASHA probe, the KGB must be amazed at how little we learn from our past experiences—and how easy we are to manipulate.

George Orlov's own words best describe what it is like to be under suspicion for something that you do not understand and cannot convince the FBI you did not do: "They have been following me for a number of years now, to my former in-laws house in Princeton. They follow me when I go running, when I go bike-riding. I went running at the Institute for Advance Studies at Princeton. They have a beautiful soft running trail there. They had a couple of agents follow me there. After I ran through, there were some little red and blue nylon strings tied to fence posts which are supposedly signs of dead-drop points, they said to me. I said, 'What?' I said, 'You guys are on drugs.'

"One reason they thought I was a KGB agent is that after I had gone running one time in Washington, I had finished my run, I was standing on the third floor of my mother's house and looked down at the same time a Soviet KGB agent was looking up at me. But I didn't know he was there, but apparently that is a sign of life or a sign of recognition, they told me."

After Orlov passed his polygraph exam, an embarrassed Vincente Rosado took him out to dinner.

Eleonore Orlov, a woman used to being worked over by authorities, submitted to a polygraph examination in May 1988 in a suite the FBI rented at the Morrison House Hotel in Alexandria. She said she agreed to take the exam on the condition that the FBI would ask all its questions and this would be the last one. The

FBI agreed. Mrs. Orlov took the test and passed. But after we contacted the FBI to ask them about their third SASHA investigation, Mrs. Orlov received a call from Special Agent Gleason requesting that she submit to another test. This time Mrs. Orlov refused.

Eleonore Orlov says that all she wants is that her sons be left alone. Her husband had wanted his ashes sent to Russia, to be spread among the birch trees of his native land. But his widow is afraid to ask the Soviet Embassy to carry out his wishes. She thinks the FBI might misinterpret it. The ashes of SASHA still sit on the mantle of the beautiful little gallery in Alexandria.

For Felix Bloch, the lessons are the same. Like Orlov, his problems transcend the factual issue of whether he did or didn't spy for the Soviet Union. Either way, the Soviets can use him like a worm dangling on a lifelong hook. Are his Golitsyn, his Kozlov, his Yurchenko waiting in the espionage wings?